Sexual Violence
Effects, Costs, and Prevention

Sexual violence is a complicated, multi-layered issue. Anyone can experience sexual violence regardless of race, color, creed, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, age, or financial status.

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for a range of behaviors. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, street harassment, sexual coercion, commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, unwanted sexual contact, sexual abuse by a caregiver, stalking, drug-and alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, a power differential which makes sexual contact inappropriate or illegal (e.g., student-teacher or doctor-patient), sexual assault, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

Sexual violence is the most chronically underreported violent crime in the US.[1] Each year 13,000 Mainers experience some type of sexual violence.[2] However, in Maine in 2013, only 359 rapes or attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement.[3] Survivors often do not report for fear of not being believed, safety issues, ability, and concerns about the criminal justice process.

Effects of Sexual Violence

The effect of sexual violence varies for each survivor depending upon the individual's gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, cultural views, support system, and life history. There are several possible effects, including sexual concerns or problems; sexually transmitted infections; fatigue; anxiety; depression; obesity; post-traumatic stress disorder; substance abuse; self-harm or self-injury; pregnancy; and suicide.

Cost of Sexual Violence

Because it is so underreported, it is difficult to quantify the cost of sexual violence. Yet, we know that the economic impact of sexual violence is profound, and includes costs associated with: crisis services; medical treatment for victims/survivors (both short term and long term, mental and physical); lifetime loss of income; the criminal justice process; and incarceration for perpetrators, including treatment and management (probation, the sex offender registry, etc.).
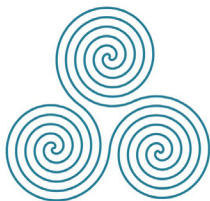
Rape is the most costly violent crime, costing 127 billion dollars annually, excluding the cost of childhood sexual abuse.[4] According to a recent report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the total lifetime estimated financial costs associated with just one year of confirmed cases of child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect) is approximately $124 billion.[5]

Prevention is Possible

At Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services and MECASA, we believe that everyone has a part to play to end sexual violence. We ask that everyone explore why sexual assault occurs, and what we all can change within ourselves and our communities to make a difference. Sexual violence prevention is about changing our social and cultural norms in order to create a safer, healthier world for all of us. For more information on preventing sexual violence, visit sapars.org and mecasa.org.

sapars.org

mecasa.org

MECASA
MAINE Coalition Against Sexual Assault

1. Truman, J.L., Langton, L., Planty, M. (2013). *Criminal victimization 2012*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv12.pdf
2. Rubin, Mark. (2011). *Maine crime victimization report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.
3. Maine Dept. of Public Safety. *Annual crime in Maine 2013*. Augusta, ME.
4. Miller, Ted, Cohen, Mark and Wiersema, Brian. *Victim costs & consequences: A new look*. National Institute of Justice Report, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.
5. Fang, X. (2012). The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention. *Child Abuse and Neglect 36*(2), 156-165.

Leading the way toward ending sexual violence in Maine